

Assessment of Progress Toward Resolving the Bushmeat Crisis on Bioko Island, Equatorial Guinea

Current Status of Monkey Hunting on Bioko

This is a 3 month update to the report entitled “*Monkeys in Trouble: The Rapidly Deteriorating Conservation Status of the Monkeys on Bioko Island, Equatorial Guinea (2006)*.” The purpose of this update is to assess the progress, if any, toward controlling the shotgun hunting of wildlife within Bioko Island’s two protected areas. Also at risk is Ogilby’s duiker.

Although many species of forest animals are being killed for the Malabo bushmeat market at an unsustainable rate, the seven species of monkeys native to Bioko Island are at greatest risk of local extinction.

During the last 3 months the conservation status of Bioko’s monkey species has continued to worsen.

Evidence from the Malabo Bushmeat Market: The Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program (BBPP), working in partnership with the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE) has been recording the numbers of animals brought to the Malabo bushmeat market for more than 10 years. As of 1 April 2007, more than 100,000 carcasses have been recorded.

There has been a dramatic increase in bushmeat in the Malabo market over the last 3 months (January through March, 2007) since the ‘Monkeys in Trouble’ report was issued in December 2006. When the results from the first 3 months of 2007 are compared to the first 3 months of 2006, we find that total carcasses are up 40% and total monkey carcasses are up 11% (Figure 1). Market revenue increased 79% over the same period last year. Revenue for the month of March 2007 was 28,650,000 Fcfa (\$59,167 at today’s exchange rate). This is the highest since these records began 10 years ago.

There has also been an increase in the percentage of animals captured by shotgun, from 48% during January – March 2006 to 75% during January March 2007.

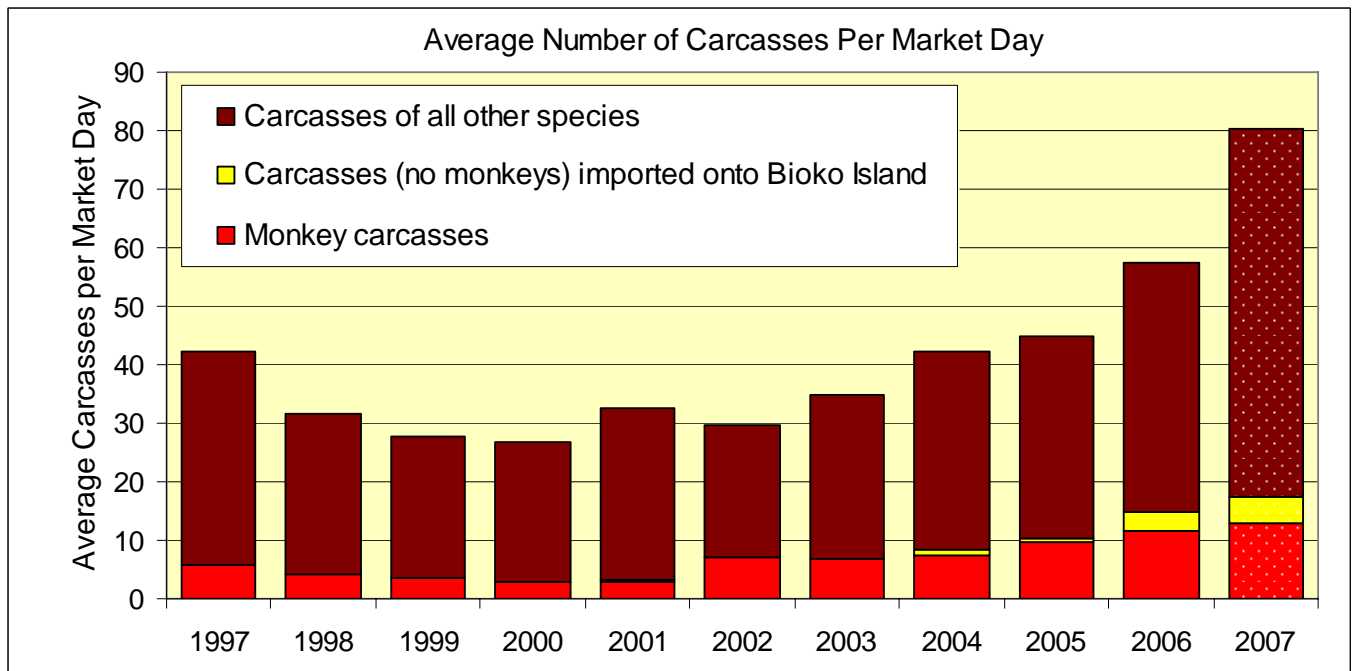


Figure 1. At the present rate of hunting (i.e., January – March 2007), the average number of carcasses per market day will reach 80 in 2007. This is, by far, the greatest number of animals brought to the Malabo Bushmeat Market in any year since record-keeping began in 1997.

Evidence from Forest Censuses: The Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program (BBPP), working in partnership with the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE) has been counting animals in the forests of Bioko Island for more than 11 years.

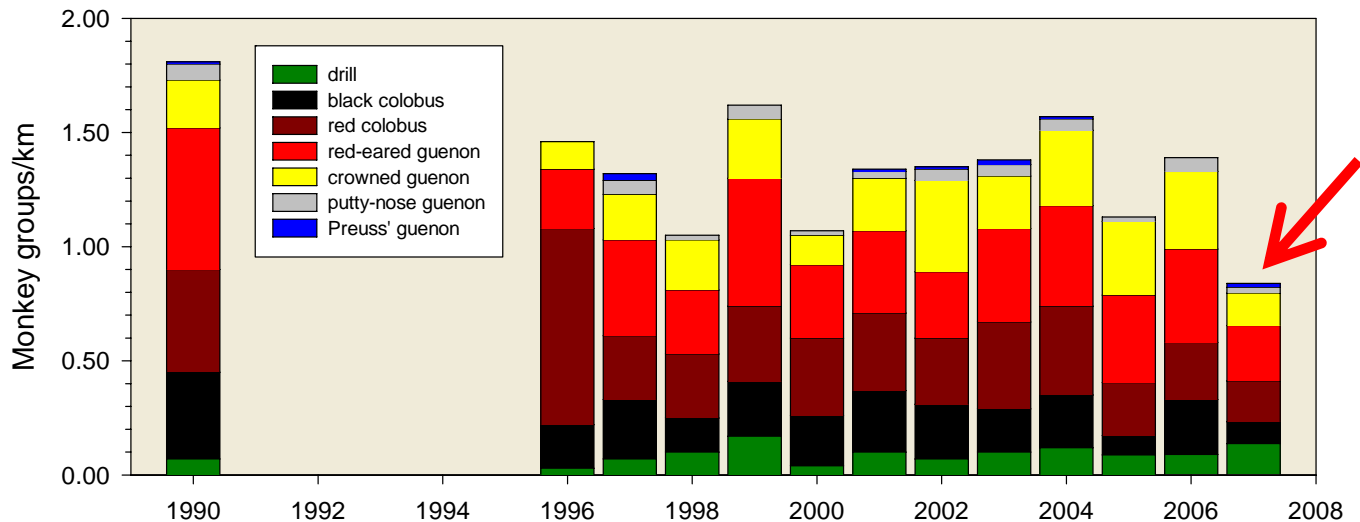


Figure 2. Monkey group encounter rates in the Gran Caldera de Luba from 1990 to 2007. By January 2007, the monkey group encounter rate in the Caldera was only half of what it was in 1990.

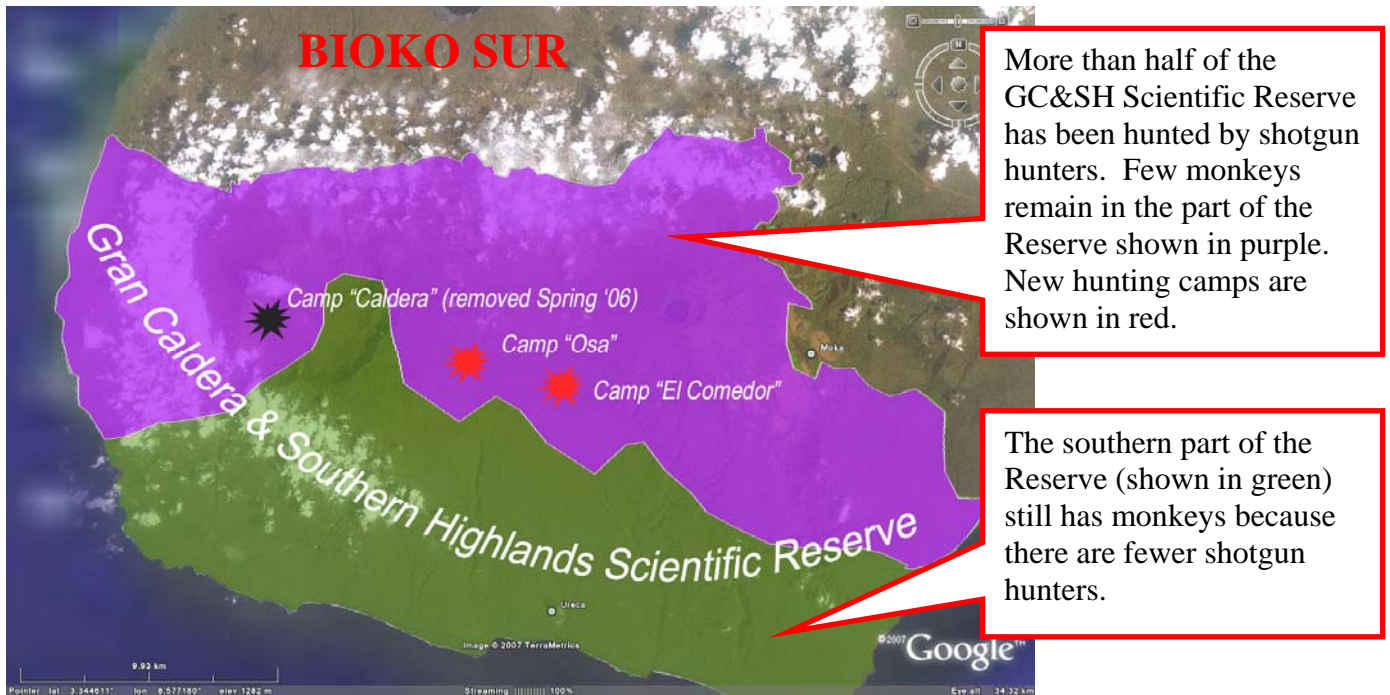


Figure 3. A satellite image of the southern part of Bioko Island, showing the Gran Caldera and Southern Highlands Scientific Reserve. The northern part of the Reserve (shown in purple) has very few monkeys. The southern part of the Reserve still has monkeys, but two new hunting camps (red symbols) have been established recently and monkeys are being shot for market. Only the southern part of the Reserve still has a good population of monkeys.

The increase in bushmeat in the Malabo market is matched by a decline in animals in the forest. Signs of hunting including shotgun shells, new hunting camps, and reduced rates of encounter with monkeys and other wildlife indicate that there is increased hunting throughout the northern half of the Gran Caldera and Southern Highlands Scientific Reserve.

Status of Wildlife Protection by the Government of Equatorial Guinea:

Protection of Wildlife on Bioko Island: The Government of Equatorial Guinea created two protected areas on Bioko Island in 1988. Unfortunately, no government park guards protect these areas nor is there any effective management of these two areas. “No Hunting” signs were placed at protected area borders in a project funded by Conservation International in 2003 but these presently have no influence on hunters, who continue to hunt in the protected areas.

BBPP has a system of ‘Forest Patrols’ surveying animal populations in the forests of the Southern Highlands and Gran Caldera Scientific Reserve (1997 to present, except 2005). Formerly, the presence of these unarmed patrols discouraged hunters in the Gran Caldera and in the forests near the southern coast. Increasingly, shotgun hunters disregard these patrols as they have no mandate for law enforcement.

BBPP also has a system of ‘Beach Patrols’ that survey marine turtles on the southern beaches during the 7 month nesting season (October - April). These patrols have been effective in discouraging the hunting of green turtles on the beaches.

At this time, as far as we are aware the Government of Equatorial Guinea is not training any new protected area guards, nor is it deploying any protected area guards to Bioko Island.

Legislative Action: In response to requests to issue a decree to stop the shotgun hunting of monkeys (as expressed in “Monkeys in Trouble”) there was discussion of the problem by the Government of Equatorial Guinea. It was decided that the legislation in place (Ley 7/2003) was ambiguous and new legislation would be more effective in protecting wildlife. As far as we are aware, the concept of a decree was abandoned.

As of May 2007, the Ministry of Environment and Fisheries is drafting appropriate legislation to control the illegal hunting on Bioko Island. UNGE has offered to provide expertise. The earliest that this legislation could be brought before the Parliament of Equatorial Guinea is the fall 2007 Session. The Ministry already has another legislative proposal before the Legislature for the spring 2007 Session.

One strategy under consideration is to link the new Government initiative in agriculture (part of the USAID implemented Social Development Fund) to the wildlife protection legislation by offering farming as alternative income-generating employment to the people now engaged in (illegal) hunting. While this might be of some long-term help in reducing the hunting of wildlife on Bioko Island, it will be too little too late for Bioko’s primates.

If the Government of Equatorial Guinea is to meet its responsibilities under the several international conservation and biodiversity agreements to which it is a signatory (see the *Monkeys in Trouble* report), it will need to take immediate, effective, actions to stop the obviously unsustainable hunting of primates and duikers on Bioko Island. That this has not happened at this late hour means that it is now time for those charged with monitoring and evaluating compliance with these conventions to quickly and fully review the situation on Bioko Island, and then work closely with the Government of Equatorial Guinea to facilitate full compliance of all conservation conventions by the end of 2007.
